



Episode 15: When A Weekend Goes Off The Rails

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

thoughts, feelings, feeling, agility, emotions, jane, experience, weekend, dump, podcast, dog, focused, mental, run, externally, episode, disappointment, uncomfortable feelings, solution, internal

This is the agility challenge podcast with Daisy Peel. You're listening to Episode 15. Welcome to the agility challenge podcast. I'm your host, Daisy Peel. Join me as I talk about everything related to the mental side of the sport of dog agility. If you've ever felt overwhelmed by negative self talk, or lack of confidence, or if your dog training to do list seems so long that you don't even know where to get started, then this podcast is for you. For more podcast episodes, training, content and coaching from me, head to www.thetheagilitychallenge.com where members get access to monthly training and handling challenges, in addition to league play, and a whole lot more. Let's dive in with today's episode.

Hi, there listener. It's been a few weeks since my last podcast episode. And to be honest, it's because I've had a little bit of a lot of writer's block, I guess, a podcast block. Imagine I'm only at episode 15. And already, I'm feeling like, what will I talk about, or they've heard all this before, I'm repeating myself, you know, all those thoughts that lead to feelings that lead to actions or in my case, inaction, because I've been putting off another podcast episode. And that's the result. So anyways, that's that thought model that I keep coming back to where objective circumstances lead to thoughts that trigger feelings that lead to actions that lead to results that invalidate those thoughts that you had. So whenever I talk



about that stuff, it's not that I'm immune from it. It's something that we kind of all have to work on constantly. It's like gravity, nobody's immune to the effects of gravity. It's just, if you practice resisting gravity lifting weights all the time, you get stronger. And it's the same with this stuff. So anyways, back to my podcast block where I can't come up with a topic to share with you guys. So when I got a note, from an agility challenge students, about an agility weekend that they had that just really went pear shaped really went differently than they expected. I remember that most topics are worth revisiting. Whether it's dog training, or your mental game, I'm always talking to people about when it comes to dog training about foundation, you always have to revisit foundation, you always have to revisit the stuff that's most important, because as soon as we stop revisiting that stuff, and we stop rewarding it and practicing it, it goes downhill. So here I am, you're gonna have heard a lot of this before. But again, it's worth talking about again, and again and again. So this students will call her Jane went to a competition last weekend. And she had what in her words was a rough agility weekend. But and this is where it almost immediately starts to get pretty cool. She came home from the competition, and she wrote down everything that she was feeling, she listens to the podcast. And so she's heard me talk about thought dumps before. So she did a thought dump at the end of the weekend, which is pretty cool. Because most of us don't even get to that stage, we just have a crummy weekend, we may be complained to our friends about it, and we feel crummy about it. And then nothing happens. And the next weekend rolls around, and we sort of repeat things. So she took the time to do a thought dump. And then she reached out to me with that thought dump that she had done all the stuff that she just poured out of her brain and onto the page in written form. So she shared it with me. But she didn't want to feel like she was in her words, being a wimp or a cry baby, she felt like the acceptable thing to do would be to again, in her words, put her big girl pants on and stand up. Even though really that's just not how she felt when she was in the middle of that pretty awful experience of a weekend. So there was what she felt like the acceptable thing was to do which is just ignore your feelings. Don't be a wimp, don't be a crybaby, don't



complain, just put your big girl panties on and soldier on. But that's just not how she felt. So there's some tension there. So first of all, huge kudos to Jane for taking the time to do that thought dump. Just taking the time to write everything down. That's a big step. It's such a fantastic way to get everything out of your head before time and emotion distort things even further, or you just plain forget how the weekend went. By doing that thought dump Jane made it possible to revisit her thoughts and feelings a day or so later. her from a little bit of a distance from an arm's length. And when you can do this, you can be better at treating yourself, the way you treat somebody else who came to you, with those thoughts and feelings, asking for some help. Most of us are way harder on ourselves than anybody else will ever be. If Jane's best friend had come to her with that thought, Jane would very likely have been there to listen, empathize, and maybe even help her friend come up with a plan of action for next time, if that's what her friend wanted. Because sometimes, sometimes when you share your thoughts or a thought dump with somebody, you just you don't really want a solution to your problem, you're not ready for that, you just want to, you just want to get it off your chest, which is again, that's where those thought dumps come in handy. Because in the moment, you might really not want a solution to your problem. And a lot of us, especially dog trainers, especially those of us who are women and dog trainers, we really like to think of ourselves as problem solvers. So somebody comes to us, and they're expressing how they're feeling or how something went. And we just immediately want to jump in and help them solve their problems and move away from that discomfort. But sometimes, you just want to listen, you just, you just want to hear out what that person is feeling. And, and just wow, that really sounds like it sucks. That sounds like it's really frustrating. And just validate those, those thoughts and feelings. And the thought dump is a way for you to do that to yourself, you don't have to look for a solution right away, you can just just get it out there, write it down on paper. And then later, you can decide if you want to do something about it, and what that thing might be that you want to do about it. So anyways, Jane has this all written down now. And because she did this thought dump, she can



revisit her thoughts and feelings, as though it is her best friend coming to her for some advice. Because again, a lot of the time when we're swirling around in the middle of a bunch of distorted thoughts, and the emotions that arise from those thoughts, it's, it's pretty tough to come up with any solutions to whatever the issue might be. If other people have those same issues, it's a lot easier for us a lot of the time to come up with a solution because we're not flying around in that emotional hurricane. But again, just because it might be easy for us to formulate a solution quickly doesn't necessarily mean that a solution is needed right away. Sometimes we just need to have those thoughts and feelings and we need some time to process them. Even if even if you do a thought dump just dumping that stuff out of your brain, it doesn't erase it from your brain, it just gives you some room to not have to pack it all around in the moment. And and think about it a little bit from a little bit more. Just from some distance. Yeah. So Jane did a thought dump. She got it all written down. And then she emailed that thought dumped to me, which was super cool. It's way more helpful to Jane then just continuing to chew on those negative thoughts and emotions. And a lot of the time and this happens at shows a lot and probably nobody who's listening here. Of course, we've never done that I've never done that, right, that's tongue in cheek right there. Oftentimes when we talk about negative experiences with somebody, and it's kind of just casual conversation, it turns into a complaining session. But Jane did that thought done for a reason not to complain, but be able to be able to process all those thoughts and feelings and save them for further examination when she's in a little bit more solid frame of mind. So she definitely did put her big girl pants on there when she did that. So you know loop back to a few minutes ago, she had mentioned that she felt like, in addition to having a crummy weekend, she was feeling some shame because she felt like man, I should be able to be better than this I should be able to just put my put my big girl panties on and soldier on. But by taking the time to do that thought dump and revisit those thoughts and feelings that is putting your big girl pants on right there. So kudos to Jane for doing that. Because there's absolutely nothing wrong at all, with experiencing disappointment, or frustration, or



sadness, whether it's in the context of sport, or something else. Typically, the more invested you are in achieving something, the more likely you are to experience disappointment, frustration or sadness because you care, you're invested. So I just don't buy it when people say they're never disappointed or frustrated. And I've talked about this before in previous episodes when it comes to goal setting and stretching yourself a little bit and growth. If you're never disappointed or frustrated ever, ever, you're probably just not engaged in behavior that really stretches you so that you can avoid disappointment or frustration because those are uncomfortable emotions that a lot of us would just rather have worried. And so for a lot of us, we just we don't set goals, we don't stretch ourselves, we don't get out of our comfort zone so that we can avoid the experience of those uncomfortable emotions that are part of the growth process. Because when you decide to care about something, you work hard at it, and you get on the edge of your skill level or your comfort level. And there you are in the path of the opportunity to experience some amazing highs, but also maybe some amazing lows, but you're in the path to experience something.

Okay, back to Jane's story, she did do that thought dump after the weekend. But in the middle of that rough agility weekend, things were just going further and further off the rails, one little mistake led to another and then three more. And then she really got into her own her own head. And this is according to her thought dumped that she sent me. And then she got lost on course, and then the dog running before her charged up to her dog on the start line instead of going to its handler at the end of the run. And of course, that run was a complete mess for Jane as well. Now, there are a lot of reasons that Jane's weekend might not have gone as well as she'd hoped. Maybe she wasn't hydrated, maybe she hadn't slept well. Maybe something related to nutrition, or relationships, or work had depleted her focus prior to the event. Maybe the show wasn't running smoothly, it really could be any of 10,000 things. And these things happen all the time. They're happening at every show, they're happening at every



competition you go to, but for whatever reason. Sometimes we can ignore all those things, and they just roll off of us. And sometimes they just feel like they're going to overwhelm us. So this whole thought dump business is all well and good. And maybe you can even do one at the end of the day and not wait till the end of the weekend. Maybe you can do one when you have some downtime at a show. But what do you do in that moment, that moment when you're feeling frazzled, and like you have 10 thumbs, and you have those 10 thumbs in 10 holes in a leaky dam that's just about to break and drown you. What do you do in that moment? Well, I can tell you what usually isn't helpful. And that's trying to get rid of all those feelings and emotions. Some of those feelings and emotions produce real chemical responses in your body. And you're just not going to get rid of those chemical responses. Once they get initiated, they have to move through your body and get flushed out. And that's a biological process that takes time. So even if you wanted to just get rid of a feeling, sometimes that's just not going to happen. But that doesn't mean that you have to swim in it. You don't have to resist those thoughts and feelings. And in fact, if you spend mental energy resisting those thoughts and feelings, that's just more mental energy that you're not spending on strategizing and executing your training and handling plans. On Course, it's kind of like if you picked up a weight at the gym, and that weight was uncomfortably heavy. If you think about your form, and engaging your core, and keeping your back flat, and all the things that your trainer might tell you to do, you're going to be able to hold that weight for longer than if you concentrate on how uncomfortable it is to hold that weight. And it's kind of the same, those feelings and emotions are like a weight that you're holding in your brain. And if you just think about how uncomfortable that weight feels, and how much you'd like to get away from it, it's just mental energy that you're not spending on stuff that you really need to spend on it, especially if you've got a dog on a leash at your side. So what do you do? Well, you move with that stuff, you reach into your head, you gently take those thoughts and feelings respectfully. And you put them in that mental backpack that I've talked about before that you've got on your back. Now you can't carry that backpack around forever. And if your backpack is



already pretty full, it's going to be tough to maybe find more space in it. And that's another topic. What do you do when your mental backpack is getting kind of heavy and you need to unpack it? But generally speaking, like I said, carrying additional weight makes us stronger. So it's totally okay to just put that stuff in your mental backpack because right now is not the time. If you're about to walk in the ring with your dog, it is time to execute your plans, not analyze your feelings or resist your feelings or feel overwhelmed by your thoughts or feelings. So Jane is having this weekend where she just she started feeling a certain way after some air hers, and she just got really wrapped up in her internal emotional state just chewing and chewing on those thoughts of, I can't get this right? And how could I make that mistake and how dumb of me and then then, and I've done this myself, also piling on disappointment, disappointment about being disappointed, and then peppering on some shame about having feelings about something that she minimizes as just a game. That's all pretty mentally exhausting. And you have nothing left to focus on the run, and the strategy and the execution. So when you're about to have run, and you need to be focusing externally on the environment and your actions, and your execution, this, this is just a good time to say to yourself, Whoa, there, we do not need to deal with this right now. We have things to do, things to execute, we will address this later. And you can keep screaming these thoughts and emotions, if you like, that's totally fine. But I'm gonna have to ask you to do it from inside this backpack that I'm wearing, I will carry you around. But also, I need to focus externally right now and not internally. And then you do just that, you may keep hearing all those thoughts in your head screaming at you. And you may still be feeling pretty uncomfortable feelings. But you can still focus externally on your dog on the course, on your mechanics, and on the execution of your plan. So that Nike marketing slogan, just do it, it really does sum the whole thing up, you just do it. You know, you can, you can go out and have an amazing run, and people can watch you and just comment afterwards, oh, my gosh, you that run was amazing. You look so assertive and confident I'm just, I'm really jealous and you know full well that your internal experience was completely different. You



were terrified, or maybe angry about something or disappointed or tired, but you went out and you just did it. So it's really entirely possible for you to execute externally in a way that maybe doesn't match up with your internal experience. Now your best performances are going to be those ones where the external experience and the internal experience match up a little bit better. But if you're having a rough internal experience, that does not mean that you have to let it just overwhelm your ability to execute and engage externally. So you just do it. And then, ideally, sooner rather than later, you take that stuff out of your mental backpack, and you turn it into a thought dump. And then you run it through that thought model. So what were the objective circumstances that got all of this going? What thoughts did you have about those circumstances? And what feelings popped up as a result of those thoughts? And then What actions did you take based on those feelings? Were they justified? Could they have been different? Because you have directed yourself to act differently? With your thoughts distorted? Why do you have those thoughts? are you limiting yourself in some way? Are you cushioning yourself from failure in some way, trying to protect yourself from uncomfortable feelings.

Now, of course, it isn't all just thoughts and feelings, your mechanical skills come into play as well. You can have the most solid mental game in the world. But without solid mechanical skills to back it up, you're not going to get very far, you might feel great, but you'll be treading water. So when you take the thoughts and feelings out of play, that's stuff that got you internally focused rather than more externally focused. And remember, by externally focused I mean focused on the dog, the run the stuff you can control? Are there some things that you need to get busy with as far as training and handling goes? And who are where can you get help with those things? When I was a chemistry teacher, I was big on teaching students the scientific method, make an observation, form a hypothesis, ask some questions, poke at things a little bit, do some experimentation, look at your results, then observe and constantly refine your theories about why things are the way they are, until stuff kind of matches up. And I I really



stressed that not because I thought every student in my classroom was going to be a scientist when they grew up. But because you see that process in all walks of life, being able to do some internal inquiry and constantly be refining is key to growth. The ability to be a little skeptical about your thoughts and feelings can go a long way toward being able to direct your thoughts and feelings. Instead of constantly letting your thoughts and feelings direct you And that's where strategies like the thought dump come in. But again, in the moment, that's when you have to decide if now is the appropriate time to let those thoughts and feelings, direct your actions and take you for a ride. Or, if you're going to respectfully sling those thoughts and feelings on your back and take them for a ride until you can more appropriately processed them. It may be that something happens, it's just so overwhelming at a competition that you do have to scratch or run, because, or pack up and go home. Because you know full well, that you just can't function in a meaningful way. And that's okay, too. But if you step into the ring, and you decide to proceed, you need to make sure that you're focused on the important aspects of that moment. And that is not your thoughts and feelings. It's not your internal state, you don't have to pretend that your thoughts and feelings don't exist, you just move with them instead of against them. And for that minute or so in the ring, you're focused on the task at hand. And then when you have the time to give those thoughts and feelings proper inspection, you do that work, it's important work that needs to be done, just not on the start line of an agility run. One more point I want to make. And this is a an important one, this whole notion of and Jane brought this up this whole notion of it's just a game. So I shouldn't have these strong feelings about it, or I'm not curing cancer or anything. So I should be able to just slough off this stuff and not be so serious about it. Don't diminish the value of any activity that you're invested in that brings out passion, excitement, happiness, and also sadness, disappointment and frustration. Anything that can make available, the possibility of really high experiences, is also going to make available the possibility of really low experiences. They're only there's only a few basic emotions really mad, sad, glad and scared. And only one of them 25% of that is



happiness. So as human beings, we really, if we experience all of those emotions equally, we're not going to be happy all the time. It's only one quarter of those basic emotions. If dog sport gets you into the realm of real ups and downs, situations that you're really gonna have to process and think about, and deal with and get better at dealing with. That's great. Being able to deal with all that stuff better in the context of sport, is going to help you deal with it better in the context of family, relationships, self care, the whole shebang. So no, you're not going to win a Nobel Prize and agility, but dog sports as a framework for continued growth when it comes to how you relate to yourself and others. Don't minimize the importance of that. Okay, friends, that's it for this episode. In the next episode, I'm going to talk about doing the work of unpacking that mental backpack. But until then, let me know your thoughts on this episode or any episode really, by heading to [podcast dot the agility challenge.com](https://podcast.theagilitychallenge.com). I'd love to hear from you. That's it for now. Bye bye. If you enjoyed today's podcast, and you've got somebody in mind, who you're pretty sure could benefit from discussing the things we talked about today, head to the webpage for today's episode, [podcast dot the agility challenge.com forward slash 15](https://podcast.theagilitychallenge.com/15). And scroll to the bottom, you'll see a section that says Share the love that has some instructions and links for how to subscribe to and share this podcast and also how to leave a rating and review in Apple podcasts. I'm a pretty tech savvy person but even for me it was a little tricky. So I've included a how to link for you at the bottom of the page. So go ahead and head on over to [podcast dot the agility challenge.com forward slash 15](https://podcast.theagilitychallenge.com/15). subscribe to the podcast, leave a review and share it with a friend. Also, you can leave a comment below the episode and let me know your thoughts about what we discussed today. I'd love to hear from you, and maybe discuss your thoughts on a future episode.